

Was Rightists' Camp Bugged?

By JOHN HILFERTY

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A few weeks ago a member of the ultra-right Minutemen was mowing the lawn of the organization's training camp hidden in the woods of the Blue Mountains in Schuylkill County.

With a clang, the blade struck what appeared to be the leavings of a dog. But why a clang?

Close examination showed that what appeared to be the

work of a dog was actually a man-made replica. Inside the four-inch object was a tiny electronic listening device.

The meaning of the incident, described by Minuteman sources, remains obscure. Is some governmental or private organization snooping by illegal means? Or did the usually reticent Minutemen come up with an offbeat gimmick to attract public attention?

The Minutemen emphatically say they are under gov-

ernment surveillance.

A search of the training camp lawn uncovered two more similarly-disguised listening devices, they reported. When stripped of its hard plastic cover, each device contained three tiny batteries, a small microphone and a small antenna.

The sending equipment, with its transistors and diodes, was packed tightly in the case. The device is believed capable of picking up

conversations from a distance of 20 feet, with a radio range of perhaps six miles and a life of three months.

The three devices were waterproof and fireproof. Each weighed about two ounces.

Last week at his home in Reading, national Minuteman intelligence chief Roy Frankhouser acknowledged that the three devices were found at

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the Schuylkill County camp but refused to comment or speculate on their origin.

"I don't know who put them there," said Frankhouser, 32, a widely-known extremist leader who also doubles as grand klockard, or second in command, of the Pennsylvania Ku Klux Klan.

However, a source close to Frankhouser said the belief among Minutemen is that the devices were planted by either the FBI or the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), which has conducted at least two futile searches for arms and ammunition at the deeply-wooded mountain camp.

"Nobody else would do it," the source said. "Besides, nobody else could manufacture such an expensive item." He added that the devices are designed to pick up conversations of people who, when discussing sensitive matters, go outside for fear the room is bugged.

Both the FBI and ATF have denied planting the devices but admit that the Minutemen, whose self-described aim is a military confrontation with Communist and left-wing groups, have been under surveillance for the past several years.

State Police at Schuylkill

Haven barracks said they had received no report of the discovery of the devices.

"I can assure you that they (devices) were not put there by the FBI," said William A. Sullivan, special agent in charge of the Philadelphia office of the FBI.

Similarly, Francis A. Quinlan, special agent in charge of the Philadelphia office of ATF, said, "We don't have anything to do with that. We don't plant electronic devices and we don't monkey around with it. That's somebody's pipe dream as far as the ATF is concerned."

The Minutemen not only feel otherwise; they charge that government agents have been conducting illegal wiretaps, searches and radio interceptions for years.

"We have the proof," said a Minuteman source, who said he wanted to talk about the incident in spite of Frankhouser's admonitions to fellow Minutemen to keep quiet.

He then unraveled a bizarre tale of how the Minutemen, using their own electronic surveillance, were able to

record illegal wiretaps of the FBI.

The recordings, he said, include conversations between FBI informers and members of the Mafia, Black Panthers, Minutemen and other left and right-wing extremists groups.

"The FBI has been trying to get the tapes back, but since the Watergate thing, they're not pressing too hard," said the source. "They know we can blow their whole illegal operation."

Though the Minutemen themselves are often regarded as gun-happy kooks, their clandestine operations — particularly the secreting of massive caches of weapons — are taken seriously by the government.

A search warrant issued on Sept. 9, 1970, on the Schuylkill County Minuteman location revealed an unsuccessful raid by the ATF to find material for making hand grenades.

The raid was led by special investigator John L. Burkholder, now with an ATF office in Uniontown.

The warrant was for the search of a house trailer owned by Richard Singletown of Auburn, Schuylkill county. The trailer was located at the Minuteman camp a little more than a half-mile from Rte. 61, one-and-a-half miles southeast of Orwigsburg.

The warrant spelled out a search for "destructive devices (all component parts and materials necessary to assemble hand grenades)."

After the raid, the government agents left empty-handed.

"We knew they were coming three days ahead of time," said a Minuteman.

Asked if the grenade devices had been present until then, he said, "I'm not saying they were there. It would be an admission of guilt."

Frankhouser, despite his silence, has in the past openly admitted that the Schuylkill county camp contained weapons and high explosives.

In a June 1969 article in Playboy Magazine, called "The Paramilitary Right," reporter Eric Norden disclosed details of a personal visit to the camp on a dark

winter night when the Minutemen, led by Frankhouser, blew up an underground vault full of arms and ammunition.

"We just found out yesterday," Frankhouser was quoted as saying at the time, "that some fink in another unit tipped off the FBI, so we've been clearing every-

thing out of the place before they move in. Tonight we blow the place up."

Hidden in the 22-by-18-foot underground bunker, reporter Norden said, were several four-foot long rockets with a range of 30 miles. There was also a chemical closet for making nitroglycerine and notroglycol, both powerful explosives.

"We've got hundreds of bunkers like this all over the country," Frankhouser told Norden, "all of them packed with machine guns, mortars and automatic weapons — and that's in addition to the caches of arms we wrap in plastic and bury underground ... When D-day comes, we won't be in the streets with popguns."

FBI agent Sullivan told The Inquirer that since the conviction in 1970 of Minuteman leader Robert Bolivar DePugh, "We haven't heard a lot from them. They've been pretty inactive."

When pressed about the

recently-discovered bugging devices, Sullivan said the FBI would make an inquiry only if it received a formal complaint from the Minutemen themselves.

"This, I take it, is a radio type interceptor device you're talking about," Sullivan said. "As such, we would be interested in it."

Sullivan added that the Minuteman and their arms supplies were subjected to intensive FBI investigations.

DePugh was apprehended in New Mexico in July 1969 and tried and convicted 11 months later for possession of explosives.

He was released on parole from Federal prison last April 30.

Frankhouser, DePugh's second in command, has been in and out of the arms of the law and always, it seems, for brief periods.

Arrested repeatedly in the 1960s for leading anti-civil rights demonstrations and for possession of firearms, he was

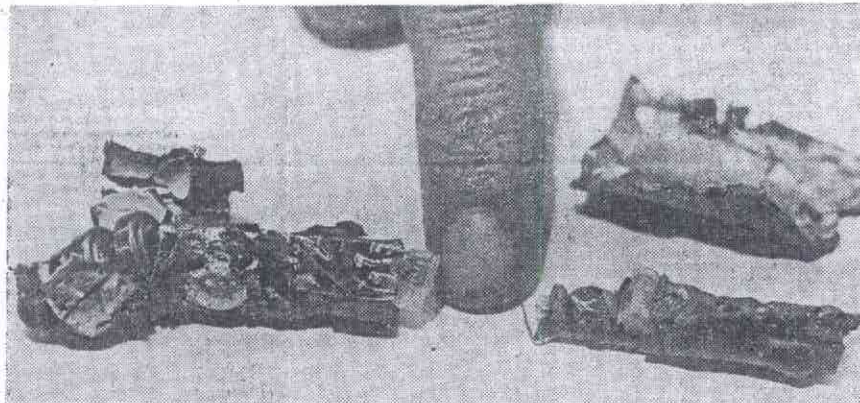
described by the former House Un-American Activities Committee as one of the nation's foremost right-wing extremist leaders.

He made headlines in 1965 when Daniel Burros, the head of the New York Ku Klux Klan, shot and killed himself in Frankhouser's two-story white frame row home at 133 S. 4th st. in Reading.

Burros' death, officially listed as a suicide, occurred the same day the New York Times disclosed that in spite of his militant anti-Semitism, he himself was of Jewish ancestry. Frankhouser told police he witnessed the shooting and tried to restrain Burros.

In the early 60s Frankhouser was associated with George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, but in recent months has disclaimed all affiliation with American Nazis, both in membership and ideology. Rockwell was assassinated Aug. 25, 1967.

Frankhouser's home in Reading still bears the trappings of right-wing milita-



Inquirer Photography by WILLIAM F. STEINMETZ

A finger shows the size of a listening device found at Minutemen's camp

ism. Throughout the cluttered building are faded American flags, Old Teutonic engravings and paintings, copies of Mein Kampf, small electric crosses and Bibles associated with the Ku Klux Klan movement, the Klan charter on the wall, anti-Semitic literature including pamphlets saying, "None Dare Call It Jewish," shiny Army helmets emblazoned with decorative American eagles . . . and guns.

Pistols and rifles are tucked in every corner, including under a mattress in a bed on the second floor. A small, crude pistol range has been set up in the cellar, where Minutemen fire live bullets into department store mannikins.

Deeply suspicious of outsiders because of past violent confrontations, Frankhouser said his activities of the past several months have been limited to Ku Klux Klan speaking engagements.

He said his own headquarters had been bugged several times in the past; before talking to an Inquirer reporter, he said, "One way to get rid of bugs in the house is to blast away with something heavy."

He then invited the reporter to the basement shooting gallery where he blasted away at the department store dummies, aiming with his one good eye.

Frankhouser lost his left eye in a vicious beating he suffered outside the Court Tavern in Reading in 1965. Three racket figures were arrested in the assault but charges were dropped when Frankhouser refused to testify against them.